

One morning, on what quickly became an extremely hot day, I was sitting in camp looking out at the bay. Ray and Charlie were on their boat, when suddenly a man appeared from the bushes, looking like he was ready to pass out. In total shock I said to him, "Where the hell did you come from?" I saw no new boats anywhere, but after a few seconds the reality started to sink in and I said, "What is happening, don't tell me, oh my God!" I saw tears in the man's eyes, and he explained he'd run into the reef on the other side of the island during the night. He was barely standing, and had no idea where he was. He had walked all night all over the island to try and

find my camp. I took him close to my water tank and hosed him off to cool down his body. He felt a little bit better after this.

We sat in the shade and he told me his name was Cliff, and his boat was the Hearts of Palm. He explained to me what had happened. While approaching Palmyra during the night, after drinking a few beers (I found out later far too many beers), he took a nap and the next thing he heard was BOOM BOOM BOOM and he knew he'd hit the reef. Being on the lee shore of the island he was quickly pushed very far into the reef. The waves were crashing against the boat and it took a serious pounding. He immediately activated his emergency distress signal, hoping the Coast Guard would pick up his position.

I called Ray and Charlie to come ashore, and I explained the situation to them. As we were making plans to go see Cliff's boat, the Coast Guard flew overhead and Charlie immediately became concerned and agitated. I felt funny about his behavior, so I went to Couscous and radioed the Coast Guard. They confirmed they'd picked up the distress signal and I told them what happened. I said the boat was certainly lost, but the skipper was ok, and we were on our way to see his boat, but there was no emergency. I told them I'd get in touch if we needed help, but at the present time there was nothing for them to do.

We all went to the boat, and saw it stuck way out on top of the reef,

the waves pounding against her. I could see a crack in the hull, close to where the keel attached. The rudder was bent 45 degrees, and I said to Cliff, "I do not believe we can save the Hearts of Palm, but as the captain, you should tell us what you want to do." I offered our help, suggesting he take everything off the boat and put it in a safe place on the beach, a quarter mile away. It was a difficult task, but the best thing to do, and he completely agreed with me.

This is when Charlie went totally nuts! He said to me, "You are in charge of nothing and we can save the boat." I did not see how we could do it and both Cliff and Ray agreed with me. Charlie got very angry, calling me names. I couldn't believe his behavior. Ray on the other hand was very excited. He said he was going to build a boat and there were a lot of things he could use from Cliff's boat, and offered to pay for it. Charlie's behavior was only getting worse. We didn't have time for his ridiculous attitude, so I told him, "Go back to your boat and I will talk to you later". I guess I was a bit aggressive, and he left immediately. Ray and I spent the entire afternoon putting things on shore while Cliff was sitting under a palm tree on the beach drinking. We found about 25 cases of beer on the boat, and at the end of the afternoon I returned to the camp and took the dinghy out to see Charlie on his boat.

As I approached the boat, Charlie was already screaming at me. I

told him, "I don't understand why you're so upset! You are not dealing with the situation elegantly. As the manager of Palmyra, I have to be in charge of the situation and with good reason." I soon found he's not the kind of person who takes orders easily. I told him I was always ready for sound advice, which he didn't want to hear, and he said, "You're a dead man if you keep bugging me." I said , "You cannot make threats like that. I am on a deserted island and I take threats very seriously." He continued threatening me so I said, "You are not welcome on the island and you will have to leave immediately." A boat was allowed to stay 7 days, but only if they made no trouble and followed the official rules and regulations, a written copy of which they are required to sign when they arrive. I asked him not to come to shore anymore.

Just then Ray returned with the dinghy, and I informed him of the situation. I told him he also had to leave immediately, since he was there with Charlie (who was still screaming obscenities at me), and I left. When I returned to shore I explained to Cliff what had happened, but Cliff didn't seem to care, he'd drank too many beers already. That night I went back to Couscous with Toutou, and loaded my shotgun, not taking Charlie's threats lightly.

The next morning, another boat arrived in Palmyra, called the Finn. Its captain, Carl, came to my camp immediately. I gave him the rules and

regulations to sign, but he refused to pay the fee or fill out the required papers to stay. I said in that case, he couldn't come and stay on the island. He said he would return to his boat and would not come back to the shore. Cliff and I sat at the table and discussed the situation. Again I told Cliff he should put all his belongings in my house and I would call around on the radio to see if any boats were available to pick up him and ferry him back to Hawaii. As we were talking, I saw Charlie and Ray coming to shore in their dinghy. Carl hadn't returned to his boat yet, and was still standing in the corner of the pier. I went to get my shotgun from the house and walked to the pier, about 100 meters, to see what was happening. As Charlie and Ray approached, I could see a hand gun sticking out of Charlie's pants pocket. When he saw me he pushed the gun in his pocket as far as he could. As soon as I saw that, I went into action. I was nervous and very anxious. I said, "Charlie I told you, you are not welcome on shore. You threatened my life 3 times and now I see a handgun sticking out of your pocket!" I raised my shotgun rapidly and shouted at them, "Watch out, explosive bullet! This is private property, and you are not welcome, especially with a gun in your pocket, and after you threatened my life 3 times."

Everybody froze, then Carl came to me and said, "We should talk". I told Carl, "You should be on your boat." They said they wanted to talk to Cliff, they wanted to know how he felt about the situation. After a half hour

talk between themselves, Cliff came back to me and told me that he had nothing to lose, he was completely broke and that he was going sailing with Charlie and Ray. This way he could at least go on a trip. He would load his belongings onto their boat and go with them to the South Pacific. I told him I had already contacted a boat by radio, the Machias, who was doing a charter in the Line islands and the captain could take him and his belongings back to Honolulu. Ray and Charlie said that I was a liar and just wanted to keep everything for myself.

I wondered what he thought I could do with all his things, stuck here on Palmyra. Cliff had a 34 foot boat and nothing of his would fit the Couscous. I could not believe what they were saying, but I remembered what Ray had said about wanting to build a boat of his own and this probably seemed like a good opportunity to him. I told Cliff the Machias was coming for sure but he could decide what he wanted to do. At the time I think he was feeling lost and confused. After a while everybody left to go back to their boats for the night.

The next morning, another boat was in front of Palmyra, and I helped them by radio to come in through the channel. The captain was a Dr. Brown, sailing from the Kaneohe yacht club in Hawaii with his family, on their boat the O'onanea. I informed them of the circumstances on the island, and said they did not want any part of it. All the while, Ray

continued coming to shore and taking things from Cliff's boat, Hearts of Palm. Later on Carl came to shore as well, helping Ray bring things off of the boat. By now I'd had a chance to call my friend Ron over the radio, and he informed me that Charlie was under investigation by the FBI for attempted rape, which explained why he did not have a name on his boat and why he acted so nervous when the Coast Guard flew overhead. I told Ray and Carl they were trespassing, but they replied, "Go to hell" and continued taking things off of Cliff's boat.

The next day Dr. Brown called me on the VHF to tell me a boat had just sunk in front of the channel. He said the boat's two passengers were floating in a dinghy with their belongings, waiting for help. They tried calling the island by radio as soon as they began to sink and thankfully Mr. Brown had picked up the message. He and I went out to them immediately. The whole way, all I could think was, "Busy day at the office, I wonder what's next". I felt more than a little disgust at the interruptions to my tranquility. I was in the middle of a soap opera, exactly the thing I'd been trying to avoid by being here on Palmyra. As we arrived to help the sunken boat's crew, I could see the mast sticking out from what must have been a 25 foot boat (it sank in only 8 feet of water). Nick and Perry, the owners, were waiting eagerly for us in their dinghy. They said they were newlyweds and this was their honeymoon trip, (later I heard the marriage lasted only 6

months). It felt as if, in only a day, I'd gone from island manager to hotel manager! When we returned to shore, I gave all the comforts I could to Cliff, Nick, and Perry, even preparing their meals.

Later we all went to the sunken boat, called the Sussex of Rowan. We were able to put an inflatable dinghy inside attached to a huge bumper, and a diving bottle. Once we filled these up with air, the Sussex of Rowan rose to the top of the water; half its body in, half out. Then it was just a matter of towing the boat to the sea plane ramp. Once there we put rollers, made from cut palm trees, under the keel and with a hand crank brought it up the ramp. Nick could now repair his boat. I found him to be quite arrogant, but his wife was very charming.

Over the next few days all of Cliff's belongings ended up on Charles' boat, including the mast, motor and everything else you can imagine. I kept telling Cliff that the Machias would arrive in a few days to pick him up, but he was adamant about going with Charlie and Ray to the South Pacific. He told me they were all thinking I was lying and the Machias would not come. By this time I was fed up with him; he was an alcoholic, always drunk, and I wanted them all off the island. They were using up my precious water supply, washing all the things from Cliff's boat with my water without my permission. It hadn't rained for a long time and things were running low. At the same time, Nick was stealing eggs, and wandering around the island

wherever he pleased, taking my tools, and using my facilities. I thought they should at least have the courtesy to ask me, but never did. I was trying to survive on this deserted island, in the middle of the Pacific, by myself, and as you can imagine I had to do things differently than people on the mainland. To be honest, I couldn't wait to see everyone leave.

A few days later a boat from New Zealand arrived, bringing the count of visitors to over 20. Nick needed a generator to run his tools so he could fix his boat, and I allowed him full use of mine. He had absolutely no manners, but this was an emergency situation and more than that, I was anxious to have them off the island. Things were just so hectic in such a small place, so many people needing so many things.

Finally, the Machias arrived and once they were tied up at the pier, I told Bill, the captain, what was happening. Bill was a good friend of mine and I was happy to see a friendly face. Not surprisingly, after I told Cliff to put his belongings on the Machias, Charlie, Ray and Carl suddenly decided to leave. I continued to tell Cliff I had the feeling Charlie and Ray would rip him off, stealing his belongings once they were on open water. He still wouldn't listen, and the four of them finally left aboard their boats. I was greatly relieved. Five years later I ran into Cliff in Honolulu, and he told me they had indeed ripped him off, just as I'd told him they would do. All I could say was, "Well Cliff, you got what you deserved." Carl also went on to

write several unfair and incorrect articles about me in a few sailing magazines, though I made full responses to these false accusations.

The next day Mr. Brown and the kiwi boat left as well, and it was only Nick, Perry, and I. I helped Nick as much as I could with his repairs and preparations. I caught fish for them and made sure they were comfortable. Once the repairs were done I gave them a few days grace to depart, which they finally did.

Now that all the troublemakers were gone, Bill stayed on a few days and we had a very good time together. We went fishing, scuba diving and toured the island, all the things I love about living on Palmyra. I thanked him gratefully for coming and trying to help. Bill is a real seaman and a gentleman. I would have the privilege of getting to know him even better in the future. A few days later Bill left with the Machias, and I was Robinson once again!

This was by far the most unpleasant time during my stay in Palmyra. I think everybody meant well, in their own way, despite such dramatic situations (I certainly did). Unfortunately, we did not all get along and things got out of hand. I think in the end it was fueled largely by greed on their part. Now that everybody was gone, I was able to find my tranquility again, and I thanked God for the return of my peace and quiet. I didn't focus on the negative things, and let them get to me. I just went back to